

February 17, 2017

Chairs of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker and Committee Members,

The Plainville Family Resource Network has made an enormous impact in the lives of my children and me. The thought that it may no longer be around to help so many families greatly disturbs me. The name says it all, *Family Resource Network*. It is a program that does so much for the community as a whole. Help is available for children as well as parents, grandparents, and anyone else who is caring for children. The support they offer is something every community should have, not something that should be taken away from the ones that do. Please do not cut funding to such a valuable program!

As an alumnus, I am so grateful for all this program did to help my family. We began attending the Play & Learn Groups when my son was 2 years old. As a single mom of two young children, I really needed all the help I could get but was too anxious and nervous to walk into a room full of strangers. Thankfully, a new neighbor encouraged me to attend with her. Once I did, I quickly realized I had no reason to be nervous as the staff was so welcoming and easily approachable. Having a safe place to go and making connections with others in our community had a positive impact in our lives but the most important gift this program gave to us was having trained, educated staff available to help support, guide and teach me the importance of all areas of development in my children.

The teachers at PFRN took the time to answer questions I had and also really get to know us. My son was extremely shy, always hiding behind me and would cry if someone he didn't know tried to talk to him. The teachers never gave up! It was amazing to watch the transformation in him take place! Not only did he begin to come out of hiding and start interacting with the teachers, but before long he was joining in with other children, learning so many new things. As he began talking to others, the teachers noticed a delay in his speech. They referred us to a screening where he was evaluated and then enrolled in weekly speech classes. Without help from the staff at Plainville Family Resource Network, I would never have known this help was available for him.

I also have a daughter who was 5 years old at the time and had just started kindergarten. She attended the Play & Learn Group that PFRN held in the evening and also participated in many before and after school enrichment programs that they offered such as Science Night and Kids in the Kitchen cooking classes. These and other programs offered helped strengthen her math and science skills as well as teaching her the benefits of teamwork and getting along with others.

During our years with the Plainville Family Resource Network, the teachers were positive role models for my children and me, helping us all to make better life choices, opening new doors with opportunities we would not have been aware of otherwise. Conversations with the director, Donna Cavallaro, inspired me to begin taking classes at Tunxis Community College. Mrs. Cavallaro helped me to make the contacts I needed and kept encouraging me along the way. If it wasn't for this amazing program and fabulous group of teachers, I can't even imagine where we would be today.

While I realize the state is facing tough times and changes need to be made, I really cannot see what good can come from cutting a program that has such a positive impact on so many families. During times as tough as these, having a place like this to help, teach and support so many is more important than ever. I urge you to reconsider any cuts being made to this program.

Sincerely,

Theresa Royce
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